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DE RUEHVJ #2278/01 2981706
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
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FM AMEMBASSY SARAJEVO
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 7264
INFO RUEHBW/AMEMBASSY BELGRADE 0474
RUEHVB/AMEMBASSY ZAGREB 0455
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHINGTON DC
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHINGTON DC
RUFOAOA/USNIC SARAJEVO
RUEHBS/USEU BRUSSELS

C O N F I D E N T I A L SARAJEVO 002278

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DEPARTMENT FOR EUR(DICARLO), EUR/SCE(FOOKS/STINCHCOMB); NSC
FOR BRAUN

E.O. 12958: DECL: 10/24/2017
TAGS: [BK](#) [PGOV](#) [PREL](#)
SUBJECT: BOSINA POLITICAL UPDATE - OCTOBER 25, 2007

REF: SARAJEVO 2277

Classified By: Ambassador Charles English. Reasons 1.4(b), (d).

Bosnia Situation Report for Thursday, October 25, 2007

Ambassador Calls Tihic

¶1. (C) In a telephone call with the Ambassador, SDA President Sulejman Tihic expressed concern over situation in the RS and asserted Dodik's behavior was part of coordinated plot with Belgrade to destabilize Bosnia and link Kosovo to the RS. Tihic explained he had met today with SDA RSNA delegates, who were concerned over the welfare of returnees in the RS. Tihic urged the international community to show resolve or no one, not even non-Serbs, will respect the High Representative and his decisions. Tihic had heard of the Sunday coalition meeting but he was not planning to attend and was skeptical it would amount to anything. The Ambassador emphasized the need for parties to engage in dialogue to help Dodik understand the OHR measures. The Ambassador reminded Tihic that the Mostar meeting would present such an opportunity, that Lajcak would be there and urged him to take part. Tihic agreed to attend the Mostar meeting despite his skepticism.

Covic on Coalition Meeting

¶2. (C) In a separate call HDZ-Bi President Dragan Covic thanked the Ambassador for persuading Tihic to attend the Sunday coalition meeting and promised to follow up with Tihic. Covic said that he sensed good will among other political leaders and a collective interest in finding a way to get out of the crisis. The Ambassador expressed hope that the meeting of coalition officials will develop a sense of vision that would put Bosnia back on a European path. Covic agreed with the Ambassador, and pledged to keep this goal in mind. The Ambassador reiterated U.S. support for the High Representative. Covic replied that this message is clear.

Spiric Returns from U.S.

¶3. (C) The DCM spoke with Slobodan Soja, chief of staff to PM Nikola Spiric. Soja explained that Spiric had today returned

to Banja Luka from Washington and would be meeting with PM Dodik this afternoon. Spiric will be interviewed on an RTRS news broadcast this evening. The DCM urged Soja to impress on Spiric the gravity of the situation and that he must play a constructive role in calming the situation. Soja replied that Spiric wants to play a constructive role but is in a difficult position and cannot publicly contradict Dodik. Soja raised familiar RS claims that the OHR measures will result in the ability of Bosniaks to outvote Serbs. DCM replied that, on the contrary, the measures would strengthen the Council of Ministers and the office of the Prime Minister for which Spiric has often appealed. The Ambassador spoke with PM Spiric directly later in the day (reftel).

SBiH View

14. (C) Beriz Belkic, Party for Bosnia and Herzegovina (SBiH) vice president, separately told the DCM that Dodik and the Serbs are aware that the OHR measures will not affect entity voting and their objection to the decisions was therefore disproportionately confrontational. Belkic said Silajdzic had spoken to Dodik twice in the past two days. He pledged that SBiH would not seek to exploit or abuse the situation. Belkic seemed uninformed about the Sunday meeting of coalition parties and was uncertain if Silajdzic planned to attend. He noted that the Collegium of the state parliament would meet on Monday to discuss the OHR measures and Lajcak himself might be present. Belkic added that he and his party were concerned over the possible outcomes of the RSNA special session on Monday.

Ivanic Intransigent

15. (C) At a lunch sponsored by the Austrian Ambassador, PDP President Mladen Ivanic said that he expected several months of political problems which would constitute the "final fight" over the future of Bosnia. He conceded the existence of the Bonn powers, but launched into an explanation of how the OHR measures stoked RS fears of being outvoted. The Italian and Turkish Ambassadors challenged Ivanic's claims and the German Ambassador argued that the High Representative's imposition did not come close to changing the letter and spirit of the constitutional safeguards for constituent peoples. Ivanic did not budge.

16. (C) In a subsequent pull-aside, Ambassador English told Ivanic that we associate him personally with the more egregious elements of the RS reactions - the call for RNSA action against OHR, and the call for a revocation of the transfer of entity competencies to the state - and that penalties would be associated with such actions. He acknowledged responsibility for the former - which he defended as a proper act of democratic parliamentary debate (anti-Dayton, Ambassador added) designed to draw attention to the issue without practical impact, as neither the RSNA nor the BiH parliament has authority over OHR. He denied association with the latter, noting that others were responsible for the call for devolution of competencies, not him or his party.

Orthodox Church Weighs In

17. (C) During a meeting with Metropolitan Nikolaj, head of Bosnia's Serb Orthodox Church, the Ambassador asked the Metropolitan to use his influence to help calm the situation. Metropolitan Nikolaj said the Serb Orthodox Church is very concerned about recent developments and that the situation is "not good at all." He noted however, that "Lajcak should not have done what he did" without first discussing the measures with all three ethnic constituencies, and allowing them to reach an agreement.

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